

REMARKS

The present application contains claims 1-316, the status of which is as follows:

- (a) Claims 1-276, 278, 287, and 302-315 have been canceled without prejudice.
- (b) Claims 277 and 279 have been currently amended.
- (c) Claims 280-286, 288-301, and 316 were previously presented.

No new matter has been added. Reconsideration is respectfully requested.

Allowable subject matter

Claims 278 and 279 were objected to as being dependent upon a rejected base claim, but were found to recite allowable subject matter. In order to expedite the issuance of a patent on the allowable subject matter of these claims, the Applicant has amended independent claim 277 to include all of the features of allowable claim 278, canceled claim 278, and amended claim 279 to depend from claim 277. All of the other claims currently pending in the application depend directly or indirectly from claim 277, and are thus also allowable, being of narrower scope than this allowable independent claim.

Claim objections

Claims 287 was objected to because it does not further limit claim 277. The Applicant has thus canceled 287 without prejudice.

Rejections under 35 U.S.C. 102(b) over Conrad and Wienand

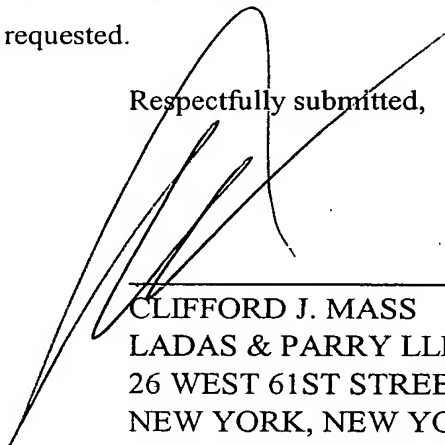
Claims 277, 287, 288, 291-301, and 316 were rejected under 35 U.S.C. 102(b) as being anticipated by US Patent 2,816,997 to Conrad. Claims 277, 291-301, and 316 were rejected under 35 U.S.C. 102(b) as being anticipated by US Patent 5,037,488 to Wienand. While disagreeing with these rejections, the Applicant has amended claim 277 as described above, in order to expedite issuance of a patent on the subject matter found to be allowable. The Applicant may prosecute these claims, as previously presented, in a continuation application.

Rejections under 35 U.S.C. 103(a)

Dependent claims 280-285, 289, and 290 were rejected under 35 U.S.C. 103(a) as being unpatentable over Conrad, or, in the alternative, Weinand, in view of US Patent 5,851,226 to Skubitz et al. Dependent claim 286 was rejected under 35 U.S.C. 103(a) as being unpatentable over Conrad, or, in the alternative, Weinand, in view of US Patent 6,129,658 to Delfino. The Applicant submits that claims 280-285, 286, 289, and 290 are allowable, being of narrower scope than allowable independent claim 277, as amended, from which they directly or indirectly depend.

The Applicant believes the amendments and remarks presented hereinabove to be fully responsive to all of the grounds of rejection and objection raised by the Examiner. In view of these amendments and remarks, the Applicant respectfully submits that all of the claims in the present application are now in order for allowance. Notice to this effect is respectfully requested.

Respectfully submitted,



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